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V.

POSTAL TELEGRAPHY IN ENGLAND.

IN acknowledgment of the March number of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW containing the article on Postal Telegraphy, by Mr. Cyrus Field, Mr. W. H. Preece, the chief electrician of the British Government Telegraph System, addressed to him the following letter :

DEAR MR. FIELD : There can be no doubt that the acquisition of the telegraphs by the State has in England proved a very decided and great success. The tariff has been made uniform, *viz.*, 1½d. per word over the whole of the United Kingdom, and the practice of working, charging, handling, and delivering has been simplified, centralized, and based on one fixed plan. All head post-offices have become telegraph offices, and *vice versa*.

The public itself takes an interest in its property, and every member of it becomes a supervisor of the service. Every Anglo-Saxon in this country can exercise his undoubted right of grumbling with the certain knowledge that his growls will receive attention and consideration. The increase in the work done is shown by the following table :

MESSAGES.	
1870	9,000,000
1875	19,000,000
1880	26,000,000
1885	34,000,000

Press messages not counted.

It has been the fashion to say that the post-office made a wretched bargain with the telegraph companies, but twenty-years' purchase of the average net profits has not proved a bad bargain, although the curious system of accounts adopted by our Treasury, where everything is charged against revenue and no capital account is allowed, prevents any one from knowing what profit has been made.

Of course, there are some drawbacks.

1. There is no satisfying the employees, who, on the principle that much will have more, are always clamoring for more.
2. Those who growl the most are apt to get the most.
3. It is hard to prevent political interference at times.
4. Political chiefs are apt to think more of popular kudos than departmental advantage, or public weal.
5. The absence of pecuniary rewards tends to the perfunctory discharge of duties.

Nevertheless, the service is splendidly performed, scientific and technical advance has been greater than it was before, and greater than ever with you. The evils of competition have been entirely eliminated. No favoritism is shown to any one. With your system favoritism is certain. Reges legerunt plectuntur Achivi. New York, Chicago, St. Louis, are well served, smaller towns suffer, and even in your chief cities the rich and busy are well treated, outsiders go to the wall. There is nothing like that with us. I hope your views will meet with success and prosper.

Yours very truly,

W. H. PREECE.